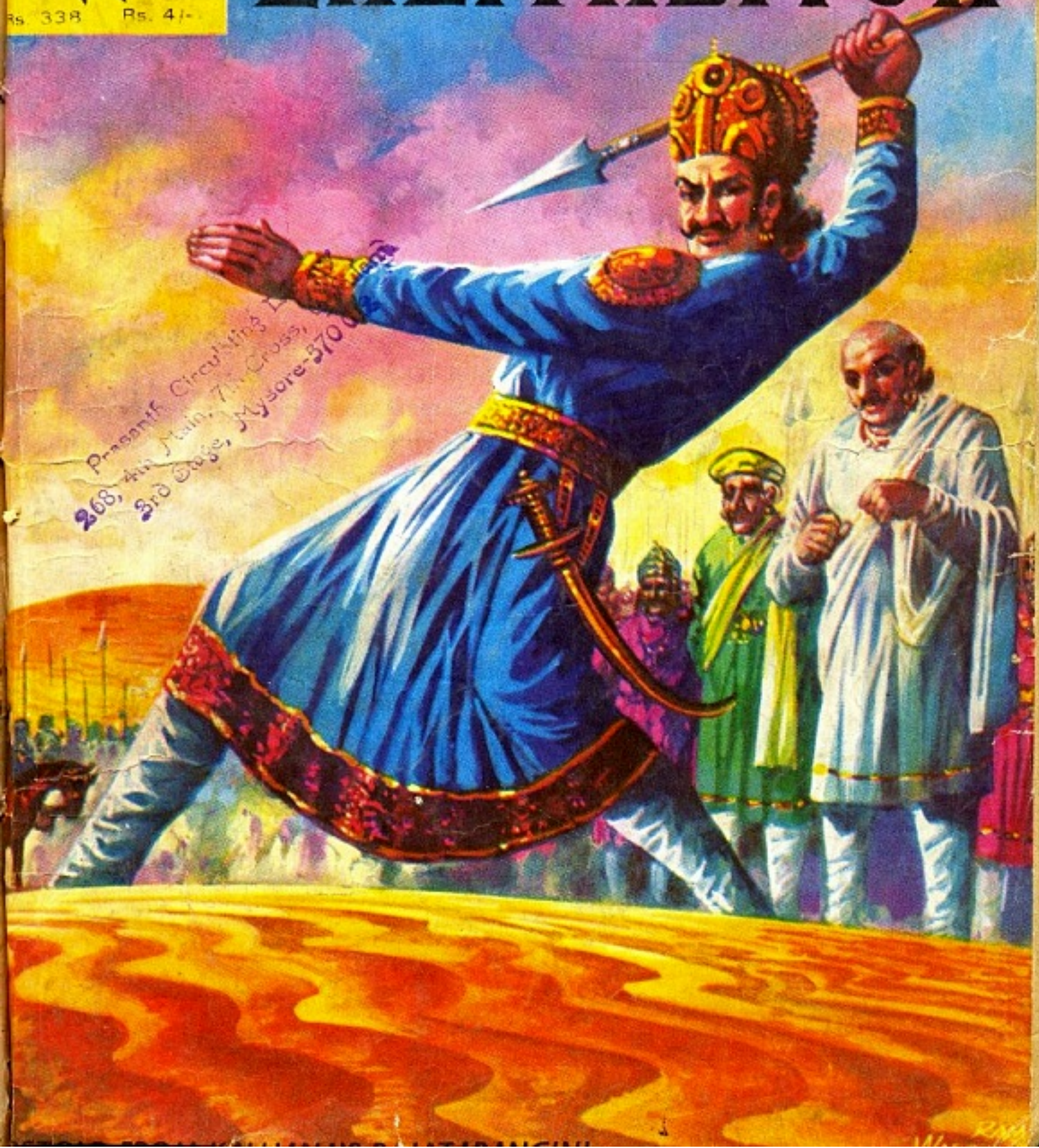




The Legend of **LALITADITYA**



Presently Circulating In
268, 4th Main, 7th Cross,
3rd Stage, Mysore-570 001

Amar Chitra Katha

No. 338 August 1, 1985

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Published by:
H. G. MIRCHANDANI

for IBH Publishers Pvt. Ltd.,
Mahalaxmi Chambers,
22, Bhulabhai Desai Road,
Bombay 400 026 and printed by him
at IBH Printers, Marol Naka,
Mathuradas Vissanji Road,
Andheri (East), Bombay 400 059.

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Bombay 400 026.

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Distributors in U. S. A.
Admans Enterprises Inc.
1123 Broadway Suite 1010
New York N.Y. 10010

Subscription: (in India only)
Rs. 48/- for 12 issues and Rs. 96/-
for 24 issues. (Add Rs. 5/-
for outstation cheques).

Sole Authorised Agency for
Subscriptions: Partha Books Division,
Nav Prabhat Chambers,
Ranade Road, Dadar,
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The Legend of LALITADITYA

Of all the kingdoms in ancient India, Kashmir alone has the unique advantage of possessing a written history from very early times. This Sanskrit work in verse called **RAJATARANGINI** (RIVER OF KINGS) was written by Kalhana in the 12th century. Our Chitra Katha on Lalitaditya is based on Kalhana's records. Lalitaditya ruled over Kashmir from A.D. 724 to 760. During his reign the kingdom of Kashmir became the most powerful empire in India. If Lalitaditya had not ascended the throne of Kashmir in the 8th century, India probably would have been overrun by alien marauders much earlier.

Very little is known about his end. After he left Kashmir all links with him were severed. According to the speculations recorded in **RAJATARANGINI**, however, Lalitaditya either froze to death in Afghanistan or ascended a burning pyre to protect his honour in a moment of crisis or entered the land of the Gods.

*

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The Legend of LALITADITYA

AFTER THE FALL OF THE GUPTA EMPIRE, NORTHERN INDIA IN THE SEVENTH CENTURY BROKE UP INTO MINOR PRINCIPALITIES WHICH WERE ALWAYS AT WAR WITH ONE ANOTHER...



...WHILE IN TIBET THE BHATTAS* WERE TRAINING FOR INVASION...

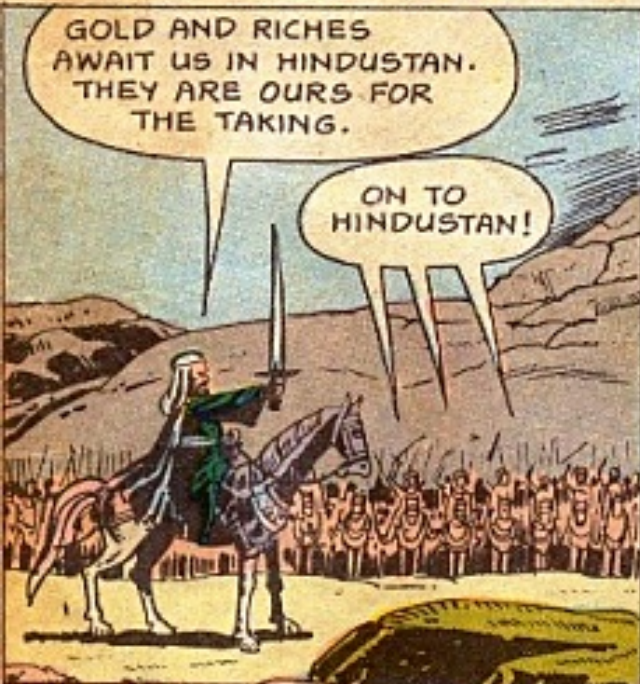


...AND ON THE WESTERN FRONT, THE ARAB MARAUDERS WERE PLANNING FOR PLUNDER.



GOLD AND RICHES AWAIT US IN HINDUSTAN. THEY ARE OURS FOR THE TAKING.

ON TO HINDUSTAN!



...BUT FOR ONE MAN—LALITADITYA THE RULER OF KASHMIR. LALITADITYA HAD IN HIS MINISTER, MITRA SHARMA, A WISE AND ALERT ADVISER.

MAHARAJ, MUMMUNI THE ARAB IS ABOUT TO ENTER KANGRA.



MUMMUNI, THE MOST ADVENTUROUS AND CRAFTY OF THEM, WOULD HAVE HAD HIS GOLD AND RICHES...

AND THERE IS NO SIGN OF THE HELP THAT WAS TO COME FROM CHINA.

THEN, WE SHALL DEPEND ON OUR OWN STRENGTH AND COURAGE—NEITHER OF WHICH WE LACK.

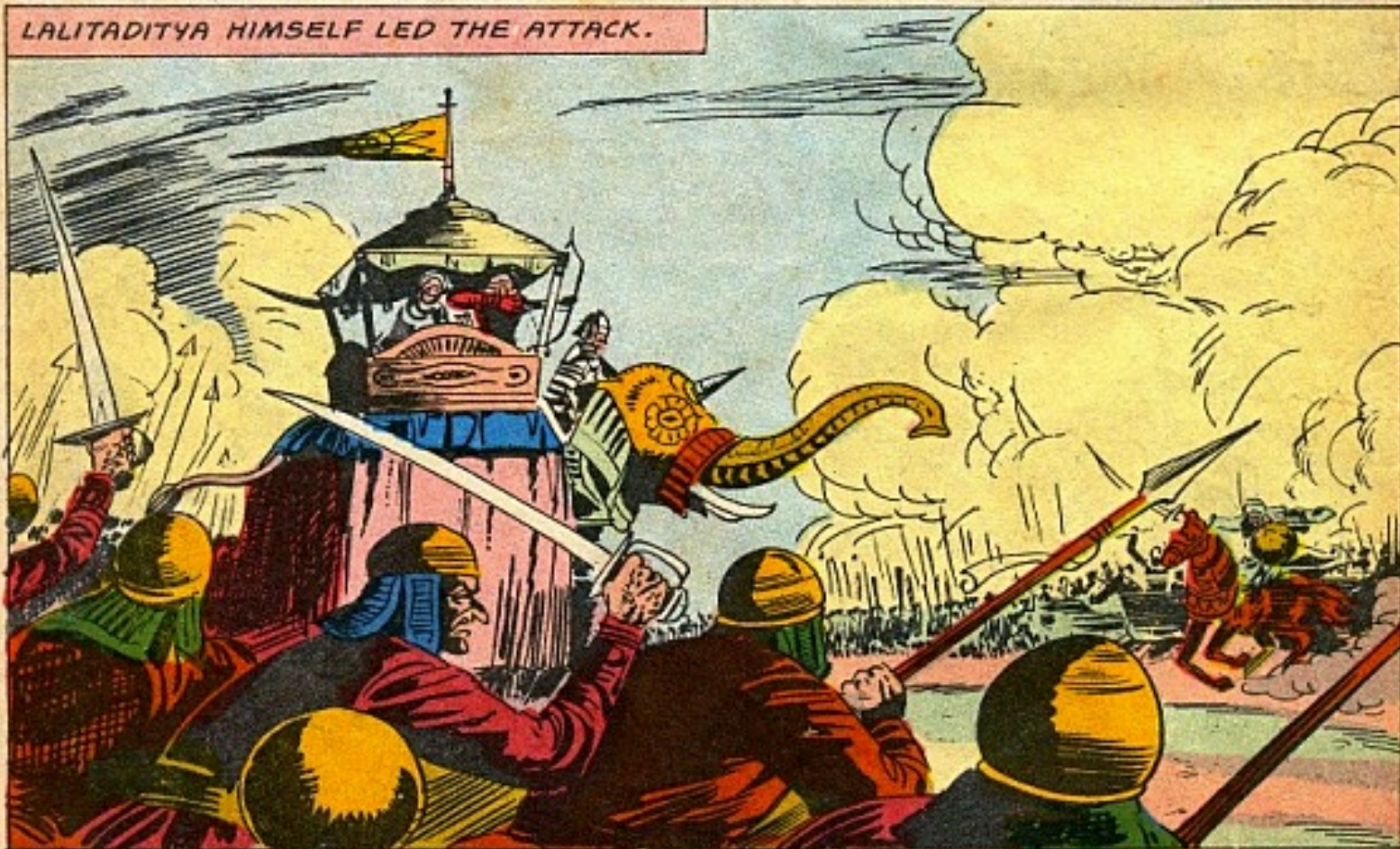
JUST THEN A MESSENGER ARRIVED.

MAHARAJ, MUMMUNI HAS SENT ONE DIVISION OF HIS ARMY TO KANYAKUBJA* AND IS MARCHING TOWARDS OUR CITY WITH THE OTHER.

GOOD. THAT WILL MAKE OUR TASK EASIER. WE SHALL ATTACK HIM AND MAKE SURE HE THINKS TWICE BEFORE SETTING FOOT ON OUR SOIL AGAIN.



LALITADITYA HIMSELF LED THE ATTACK.



THE VALIANT KASHMIRI SOLDIERS ROUTED THE MARAUDERS IN NO TIME.

GLORY TO
RAJA
LALITADITYA!

TO COMMEMORATE HIS VICTORY, LALITADITYA BUILT MANY CITIES; BUT THE ONE HE WAS PROUDEST OF WAS PARIHASAPURA.

THERE IS NO CITY IN THE LAND AS MAGNIFICENT AS THIS ONE.

MAHARAJ, HAVE YOU SEEN PRAVARAPURA, THE CITY BUILT BY YOUR ANCESTOR, PRAVARASENA?

NO, NAGARSETH. BUT I SHALL NOW.

NAGARSETH OF PRAVARAPURA WAS A NOBLE IN THE COURT OF LALITADITYA.

AT PRAVARAPURA—

YOUR WINE IS EXCELLENT, NAGARSETH.

PRAVARAPURA SERVES THE BEST WINE IN THE LAND, MAHARAJ.

FILL IT TO THE BRIM. YES, PRAVARA-
PURA IS A FINE CITY, INDEED. BUT
IT CANNOT COMPARE WITH MY
PARIHASAPURA.

BUT
MAHARAJ...



...EVEN POETS SAY
THERE IS NO CITY ON
EARTH LIKE
PRAVARAPURA.



THEN
THEY
LIE!



GENERAL! BURN
DOWN THIS CITY!
REDUCE IT TO
ASHES BEFORE
DAWN!



OH GOD! WHAT
NOW, MITRA
SHARMA?

WELL...
DIDN'T YOU
HEAR THE
KING'S
COMMAND? THE
CITY WILL HAVE
TO BURN.





HE SENT AT ONCE FOR MITRA SHARMA.

WAS... WAS THE ORDER I ISSUED LAST NIGHT CARRIED OUT?



YES, MAHARAJ.



I SUPERVISED THE OPERATIONS MYSELF, TO MAKE SURE THAT NOTHING WENT WRONG.

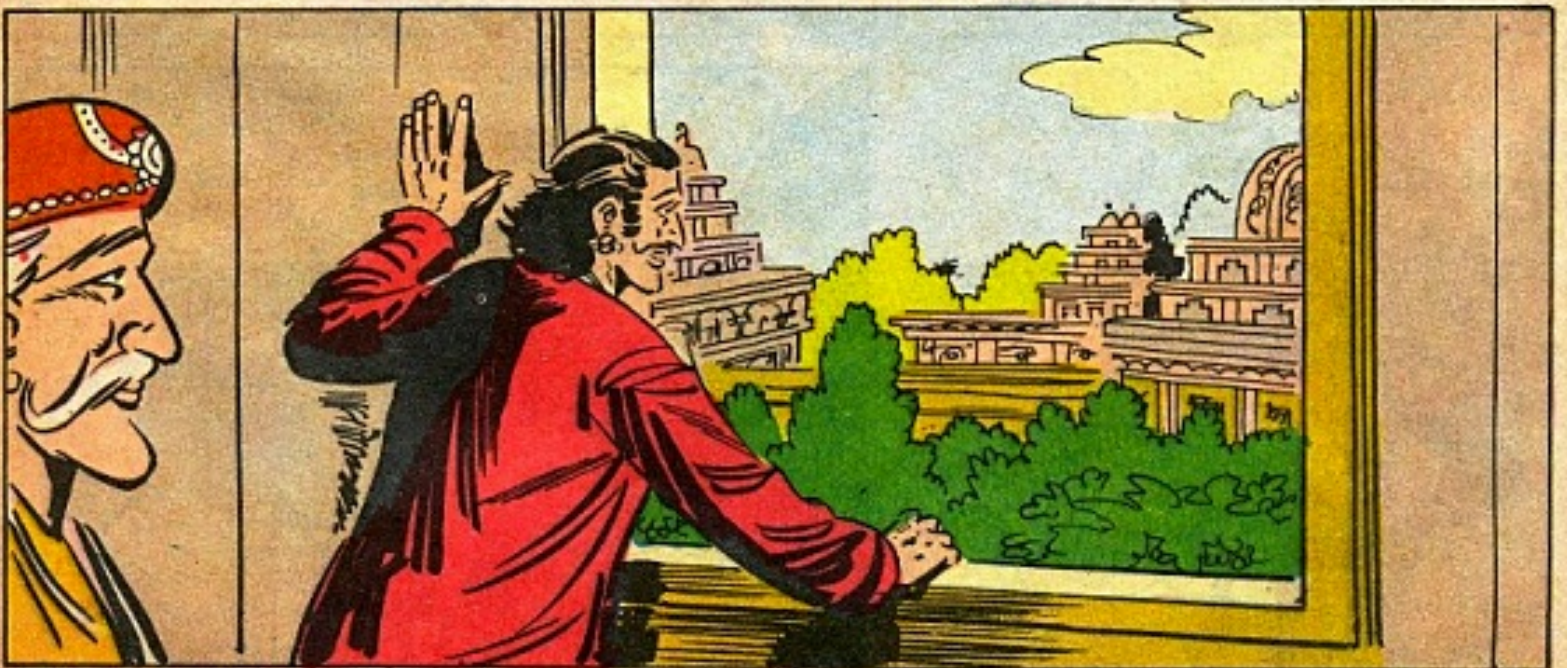
OH, NO! WHY DID YOU?

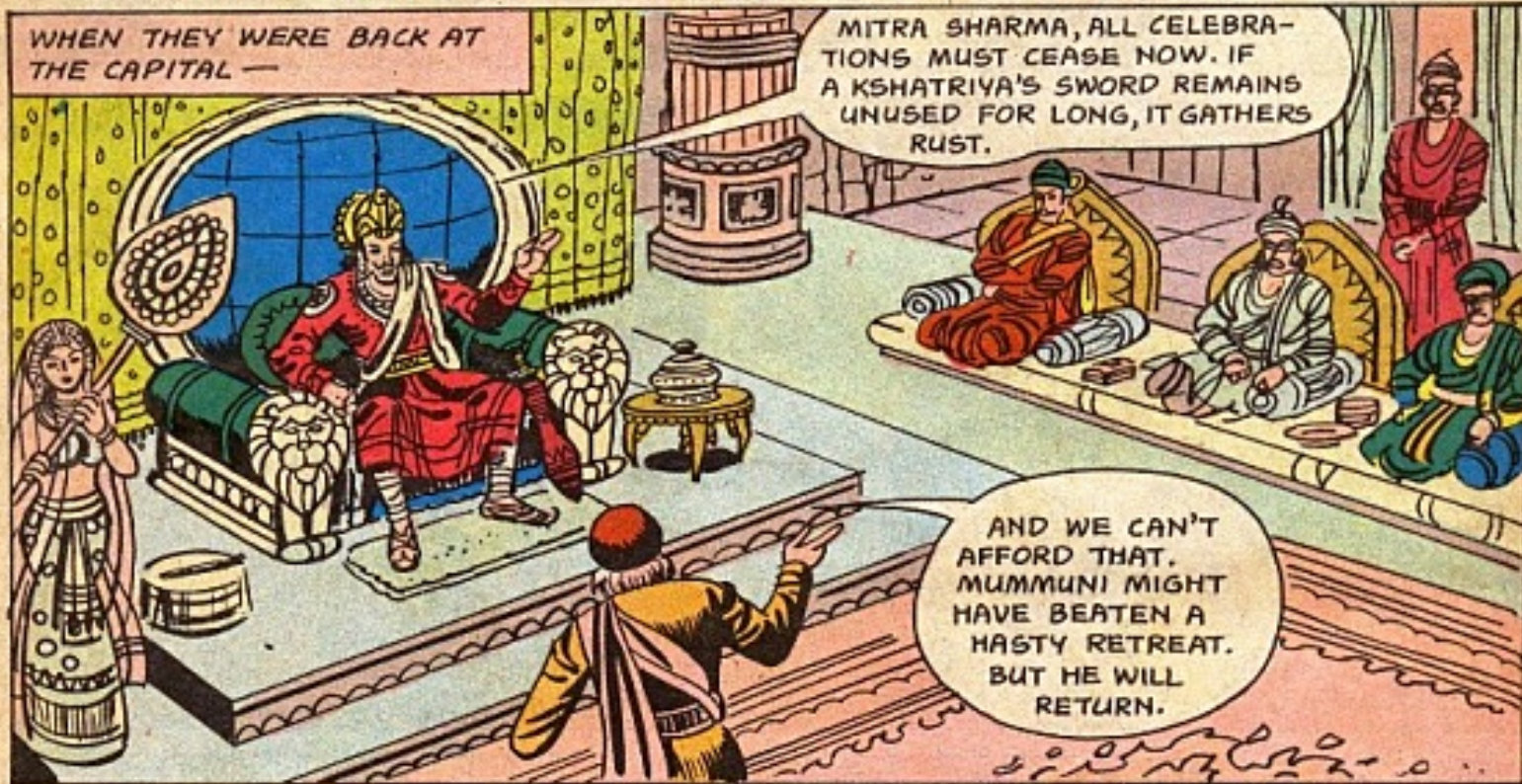
I WAS NOT MYSELF... IT WAS THE WINE... YOU SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER, MITRA SHARMA...



I ONLY KNOW THAT THE KING'S ORDERS MUST BE OBEYED.

NO! NOT WHEN WINE HAS DEPRIVED HIM OF HIS SENSES.





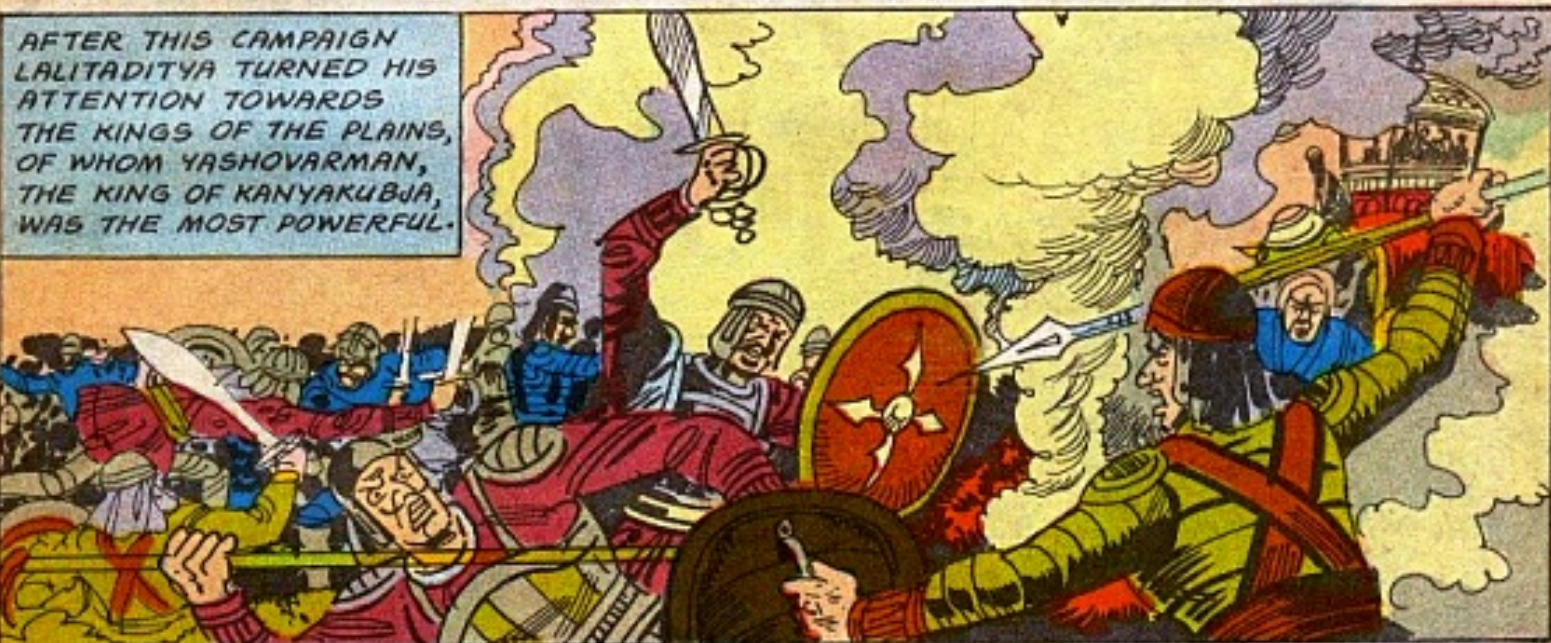
LALITADITYA'S DIGVIJAYA* BEGAN WITH THE SUBJECTION OF THE HILL TRIBES OF KASHMIR LIKE THE DARADS, THE KAMBHOJAS AND THE TUKHARAS.



IN THE LAND OF THE TUKHARAS OR TURKS, LALITADITYA CAME ACROSS AN EXTREMELY INTELLIGENT TURK BUDDHIST NAMED CHANKUN.



AFTER THIS CAMPAIGN LALITADITYA TURNED HIS ATTENTION TOWARDS THE KINGS OF THE PLAINS, OF WHOM YASHOVARMAN, THE KING OF KANYAKUBJA, WAS THE MOST POWERFUL.



OUR ARMIES ARE WELL MATCHED, MITRA SHARMA. WE HAVE THE UPPER HAND, NO DOUBT. BUT THE SOLDIERS OF KANYAKUBJA ARE NO MEAN WARRIORS.

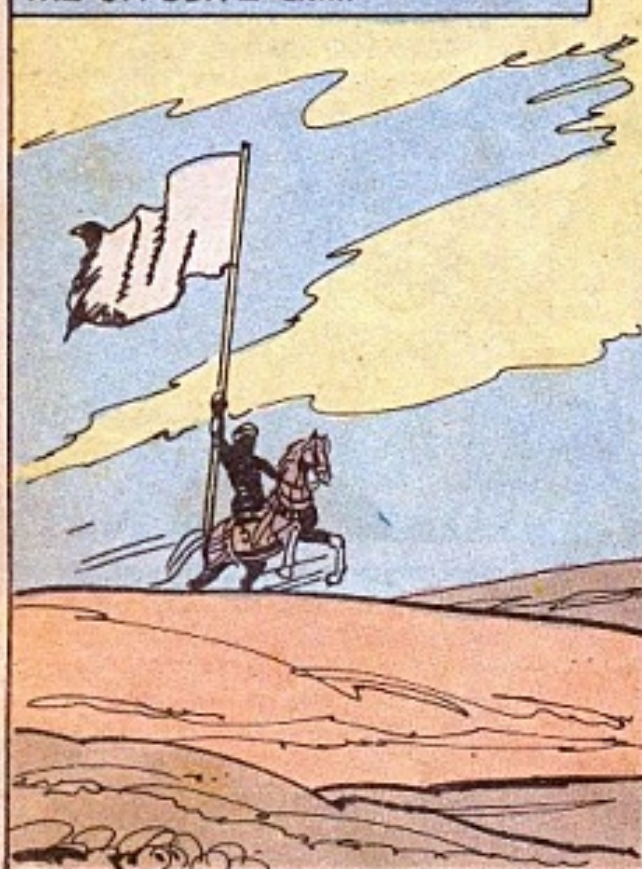
ISN'T IT A PITY THAT THEY HAVE TO BE SLAIN?



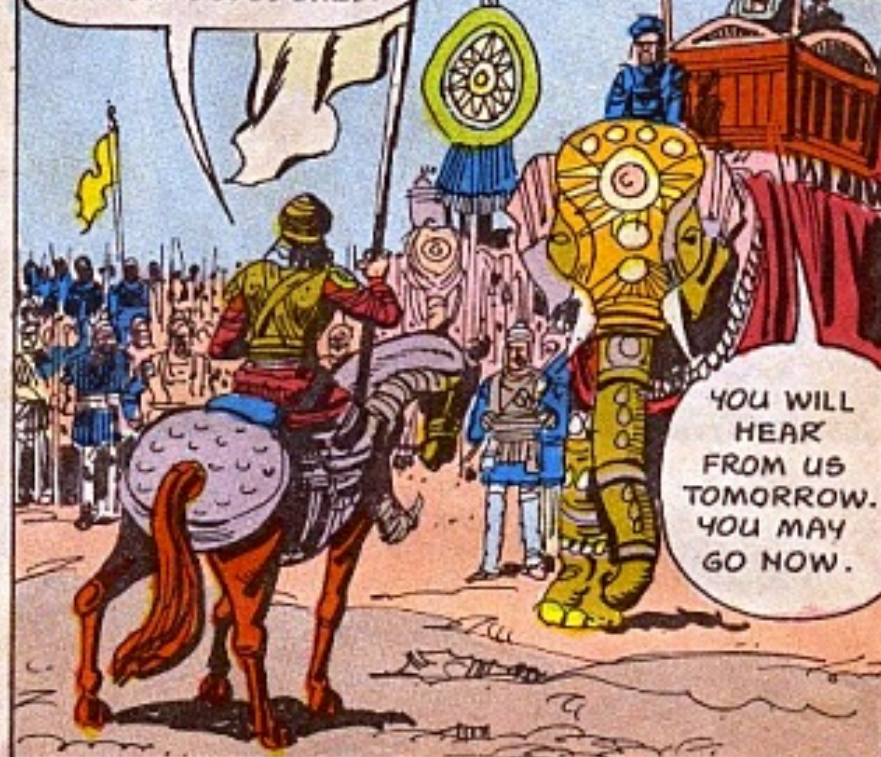
THAT LIES IN OUR HANDS. AS I DECLARED WAR SO SHALL I CALL FOR PEACE.



A MESSENGER CARRIED LALITADITYA'S PEACE PROPOSALS TO THE OPPOSITE CAMP.



EMPEROR LALITADITYA URGES YOU TO SIGN A TREATY OF PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP TO PUT AN END TO THIS WANTON BLOODSHED.



YOU WILL HEAR FROM US TOMORROW. YOU MAY GO NOW.

LATER, WHEN YASHOVARMAN CONFERRED WITH HIS GENERAL —

LALITADITYA HAS A POWERFUL ARMY, NO DOUBT. BUT HE LACKS THE WILL TO FIGHT.

THAT MAY BE TRUE, MAHARAJ. BUT OUR ARMY MAY NOT BE ABLE TO HOLD OUT MUCH LONGER.



YASHOVARMAN TURNED TO HIS MINISTER.

WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST?

LET US SIGN THE TREATY, MAHARAJ. I WILL DRAFT IT TO OUR ADVANTAGE.



THE NEXT DAY —

... THIS BEING THE
TREATY OF PEACE
CONCLUDED BETWEEN
MAHARAJA YASHOVARMAN
AND MAHARAJA
LALITADITYA...

I BEG YOUR PARDON,
MINISTER. SHOULDN'T IT
READ : BETWEEN MAHARAJA
LALITADITYA AND MAHARAJA
YASHOVARMAN... OUR
EMPEROR BEING THE MORE
POWERFUL OF THE TWO ?



YASHOVARMAN WAS DEFEATED AND TAKEN CAPTIVE.

SEE WHERE YOUR CRAFTINESS HAS LED YOU, YASHOVARMAN. YOU, WHO WERE ONCE SERVED BY THE ILLUSTRIOUS POETS BHAVABHUTI AND VAKPATI, MUST NOW SING EMPEROR LALITADITYA'S PRAISES LIKE A COMMON MINSTREL.



LATER —

OUR EMPEROR NOW BECOMES THE OVERLORD OF ALL THE KINGS WHO ACCEPTED YASHOVARMAN'S SUZERAINITY.

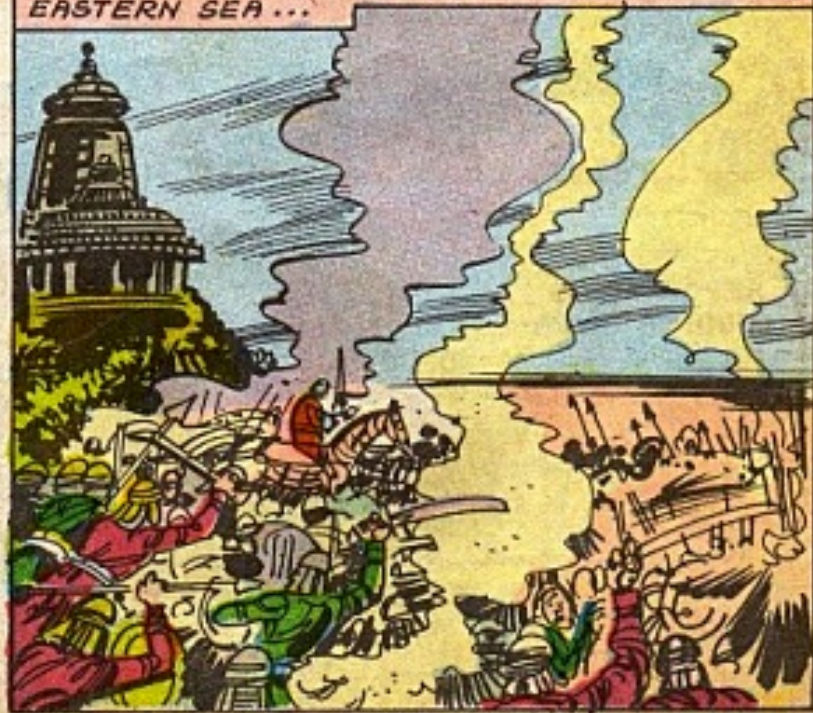


TRUE. BUT ARE THEY AWARE OF IT?

CHANKUN IS RIGHT. THEY MAY CONSIDER THEMSELVES INDEPENDENT NOW. WE MUST MARCH OUT AND ESTABLISH OUR AUTHORITY.



BENGAL WAS OVERRUN WITHOUT A FIGHT. AFTER CONQUERING KALINGA* AND ANNEXING ALL THE TERRITORY AS FAR AS THE EASTERN SEA ...



...LALITADITYA TURNED SOUTH-WEST WHERE QUEEN RATTA OF KARNATA* SURRENDERED WITHOUT OFFERING ANY RESISTANCE.

I AM GRATEFUL TO YOU, GRACIOUS QUEEN. BY YOUR ACT, YOU HAVE PREVENTED UNNECESSARY LOSS OF LIVES.

CHANKUN, OUR PRESENCE HERE MERITS A MEMORIAL. A UNIQUE MEMORIAL.

LEAVE IT TO ME, MAHARAJ. I SHALL BEGIN WORK ON IT AT ONCE.

CHANKUN CHOSE TO BUILD A TEMPLE — A TEMPLE IN WHICH HE EMPLOYED A RARE DEVICE.

THE IDOL LIES IN MID-AIR! IT'S A MIRACLE!

IT IS NO MIRACLE, QUEEN RATTA. THE PULL OF TWO POWERFUL MAGNETS, ONE IN THE ROOF AND THE OTHER IN THE FLOOR, KEEP THE IDOL SUSPENDED IN MID-AIR.

THE IDOL REPRESENTS LORD NARASIMHA KILLING THE ASURA HIRANYAKASHIPU...

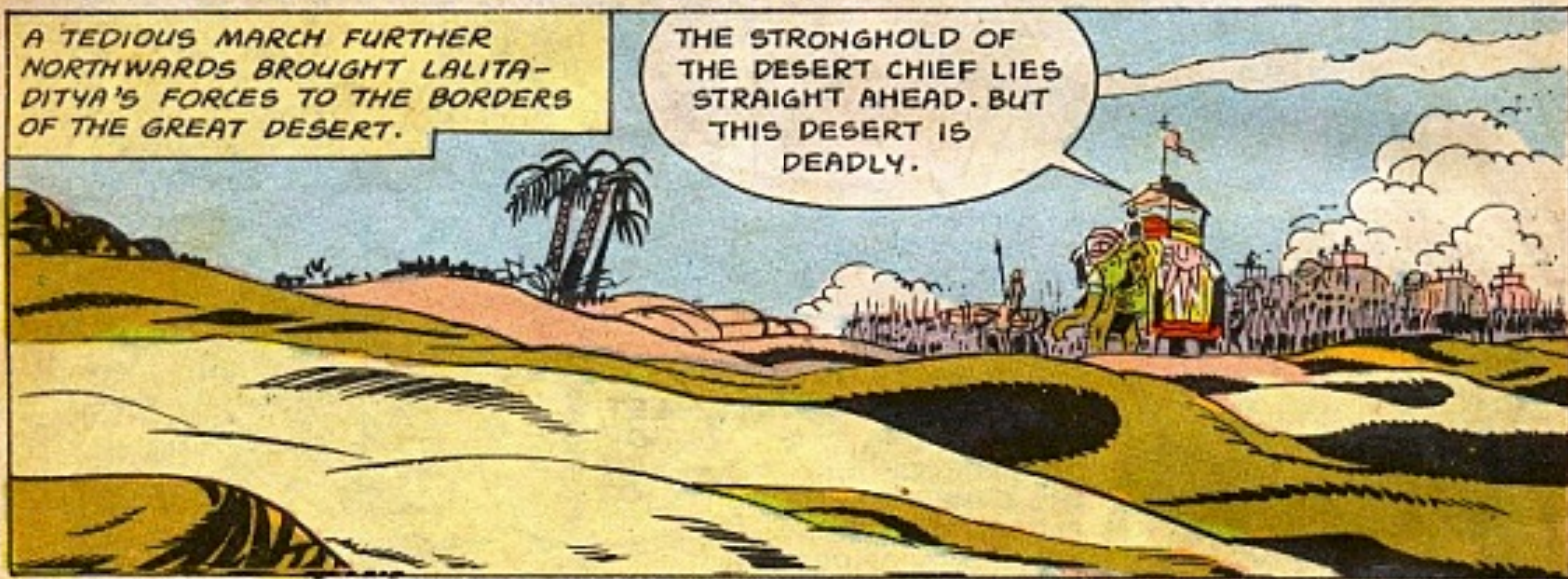
NEITHER ON THE EARTH NOR IN THE SKY — MARVELLOUS!

FROM KARNATA, LALITADITYA TURNED NORTHWARDS. ON THE HOMEWARD MARCH HE ANNEXED THE KINGDOMS OF THE KONKAN AND DWARKA ON THE WESTERN COAST.



A TEDIOUS MARCH FURTHER NORTHWARDS BROUGHT LALITADITYA'S FORCES TO THE BORDERS OF THE GREAT DESERT.

THE STRONGHOLD OF THE DESERT CHIEF LIES STRAIGHT AHEAD. BUT THIS DESERT IS DEADLY.



WE WILL HAVE TO SKIRT IT TO REACH HIS BASE ON THE OTHER SIDE.



THAT WILL TAKE US OVER A HUNDRED DAYS. THERE IS A SHORT, SAFE, ROUTE RIGHT THROUGH THE DESERT, BUT IT IS NOT KNOWN TO ME.

WE WILL LEAVE OUR ELEPHANTS BEHIND. WATER IS SCARCE EVEN ALONG THE LONG ROUTE.



WE HAVE AN ARDUOUS JOURNEY AHEAD OF US. WATER THE ANIMALS AND LET THE SOLDIERS TAKE SOME REST.

YES, MAHARAJ.



THE CAMP WAS PITCHED AND THE ATTENDANTS WATERED THE HORSES AND ELEPHANTS.



THE NEXT MORNING —

WHO IS THAT STAGGERING OUT OF THE DESERT?

LET US GO AND FIND OUT.



WHOSE SOLDIERS ARE YOU?


KING LALITADITYA'S.

TAKE ME TO HIM IMMEDIATELY.






LATER —




SHOULD WE
ACCEPT
DHARMAPRIYA'S
OFFER,
CHANKUN.

HE IS A
STRANGER.
I WOULD BE
CAUTIOUS,
MAHARAJ.



HE IS OUT FOR REVENGE. I THINK
WE CAN TRUST HIM, MAHARAJ.
BESIDES OUR SOLDIERS ARE
GETTING RESTLESS. THE SOONER
WE FINISH OUR CAMPAIGN
AND RETURN HOME THE
BETTER.

THAT WAS ALL LALITADITYA NEEDED.



ALL RIGHT, WE
MARCH THROUGH THE
DESERT WITH
DHARMAPRIYA, KEEPING
A CLOSE WATCH
ON HIM.

DHARMAPRIYA LED LALITADITYA'S
ARMY INTO THE DESERT.

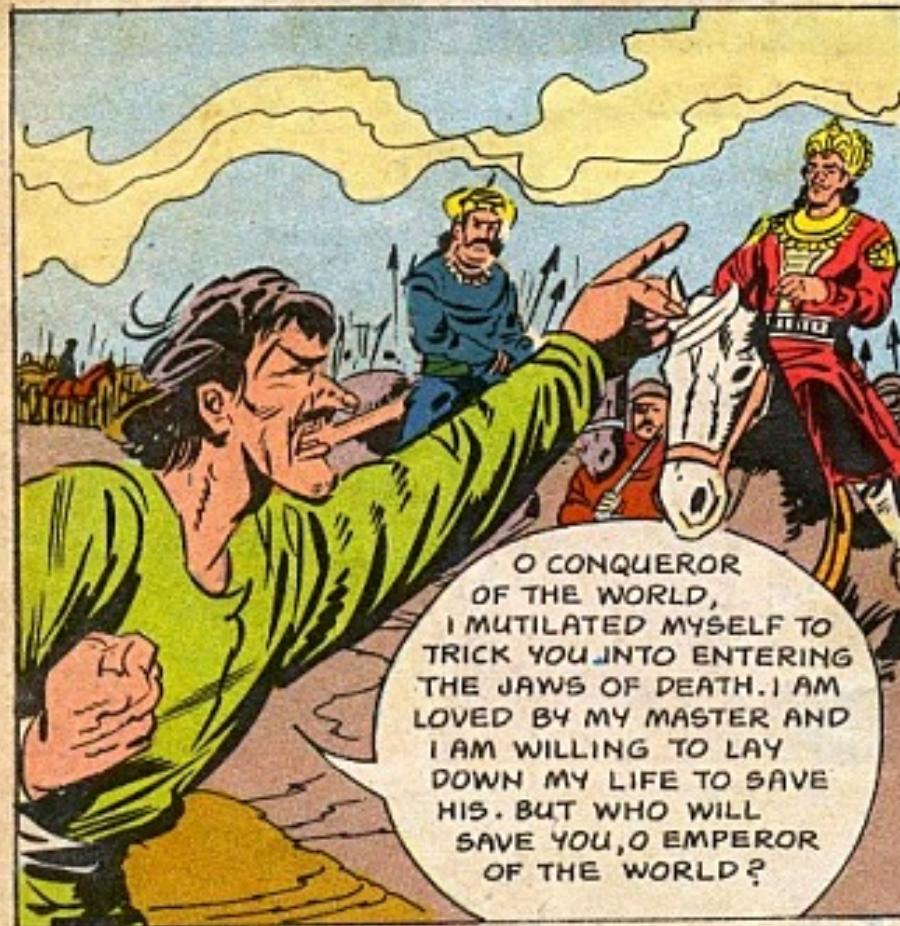
ON THE FIFTEENTH DAY —

WE HAVE RUN OUT OF WATER. BUT, THE END OF THE DESERT IS NOWHERE IN SIGHT.

DHARMAPRIYA, FIFTEEN DAYS HAVE GONE BY. HOW FAR IS IT FROM HERE?



DO YOU MEAN THE REALM OF MY CHIEF OR THE REALM OF YAMA?



O CONQUEROR OF THE WORLD, I MUTILATED MYSELF TO TRICK YOU INTO ENTERING THE JAWS OF DEATH. I AM LOVED BY MY MASTER AND I AM WILLING TO LAY DOWN MY LIFE TO SAVE HIS. BUT WHO WILL SAVE YOU, O EMPEROR OF THE WORLD?

I WILL KILL THE DECEIVER.

NO, YOU WILL NOT. I ADMIRE HIS LOYALTY TO HIS CHIEF.



I AM INVINCIBLE. IT IS YOU WHO WILL BE WITHOUT A SAVIOUR FOR ALL YOUR LOYALTY.

IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS THE SCORCHING HEAT OF THE DESERT STARTED TAKING ITS TOLL.

WATER...
WATER...

OH GOD, WE WILL
ALL PERISH HERE.



GOADED BY LALITADITYA, HIS ARMY TRUDGED ON. THEN, AT THE FOOT OF A SAND DUNE, SOMETHING CAUGHT LALITADITYA'S ATTENTION.

WHAT IS
THAT?

DRIED BLADES
OF GRASS! HERE
IN THE DESERT?

LALITADITYA HURLED A SPEAR INTO THE GROUND WITH ALL THE FORCE HE COULD MUSTER.



A FEW PARTICLES OF SAND WERE STUCK TO THE BLADE OF THE SPEAR.

HMMM... SAND DOES NOT STICK UNLESS IT IS DAMP.



DIG UP THE GROUND AT THIS SPOT.



WATER!

WATER!
WATER!



O WATER!
SWEET WATER!



MY LOYAL
ENEMY,
DRINK.

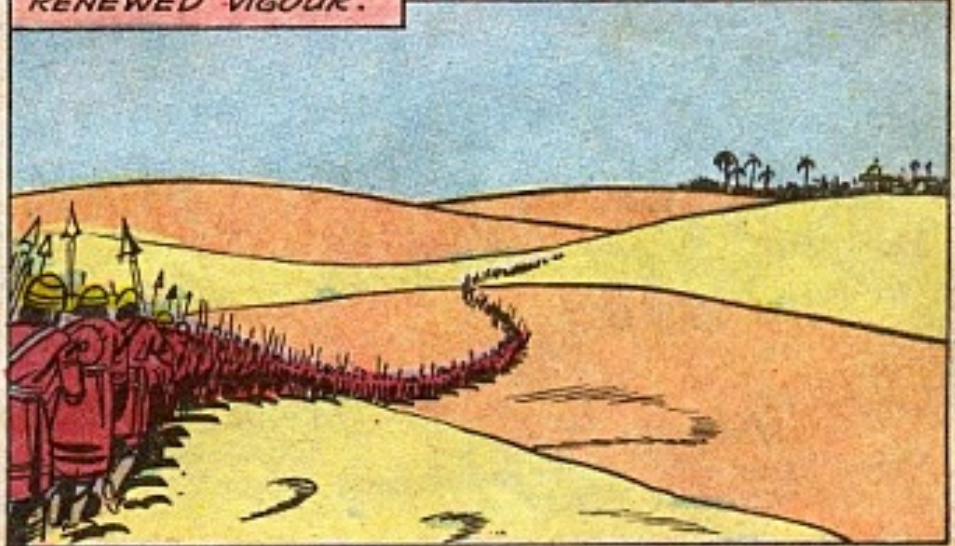
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT.
NO ONE EVER FOUND
WATER IN THIS
DESERT. IT IS A
MIRACLE.



IT IS NOT
A MIRACLE.
IT IS ONLY
A QUESTION
OF KEEPING
YOUR WITS
ABOUT YOU.



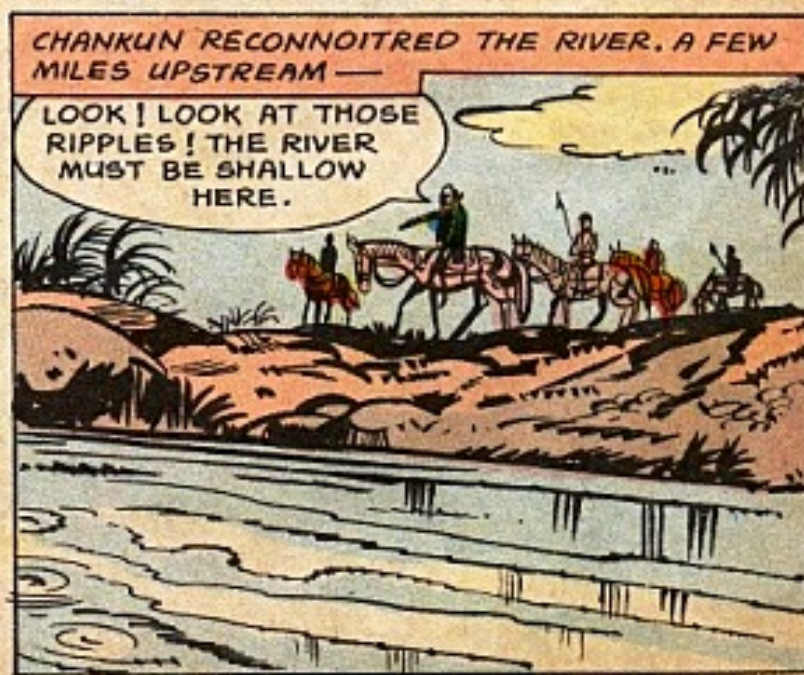
HAVING SLAKED THEIR THIRST, LALITADITYA'S
SOLDIERS MARCHED OUT OF THE DESERT WITH
RENEWED VIGOUR.



STUNNED TO SEE THEM COME THROUGH THE
DESERT ALIVE, THE CHIEF MEEKLY
SURRENDERED HIMSELF.

THE EMPEROR'S
SLAVE SHALL USE
HIS SWORD IN THE
SERVICE OF THE
EMPEROR ALONE.





I WAS RIGHT.
THE ARMY CAN
CROSS AT THIS
POINT.



AFTER CAREFULLY TESTING
THE NARROW SHALLOW STRETCH,
CHANKUN LED THE ARMY
ACROSS THE RIVER.



TAKEN BY SURPRISE, THE RAJA OFFERED NO
RESISTANCE WHATSOEVER.



HAVING FULFILLED HIS DREAM
WITH THE MINIMUM OF BLOODSHED,
LALITADITYA RETURNED TO
KASHMIR. BUT IN
KASHMIR —

THOSE FARMERS
LOOK ILL-FED,
CHANKUN.





NOR DID THEY HAVE TO
BOW TO THE WHIMS OF
NATURE.

WHAT A FINE CROP!
AGRICULTURE IS THE
MAINSTAY OF A COUNTRY'S
ECONOMY, AND THE TILLERS
OF THE SOIL, ITS MOST
PRECIOUS SUBJECTS.

I HEARTILY
AGREE,
MAHARAJ.



ONCE, WHILE LALITADITYA AND
CHANKUN WERE RIDING
THROUGH A FOREST —



WHO ARE
YOU, FAIR
MAIDENS?
WHY DO YOU
DANCE
HERE?

WE ARE
SISTERS,
MAHARAJ.



WE DO NOT KNOW WHY,
BUT FOR GENERATIONS
IT HAS BEEN A RELIGIOUS
TRADITION IN OUR FAMILY
TO DANCE AT THIS SPOT.

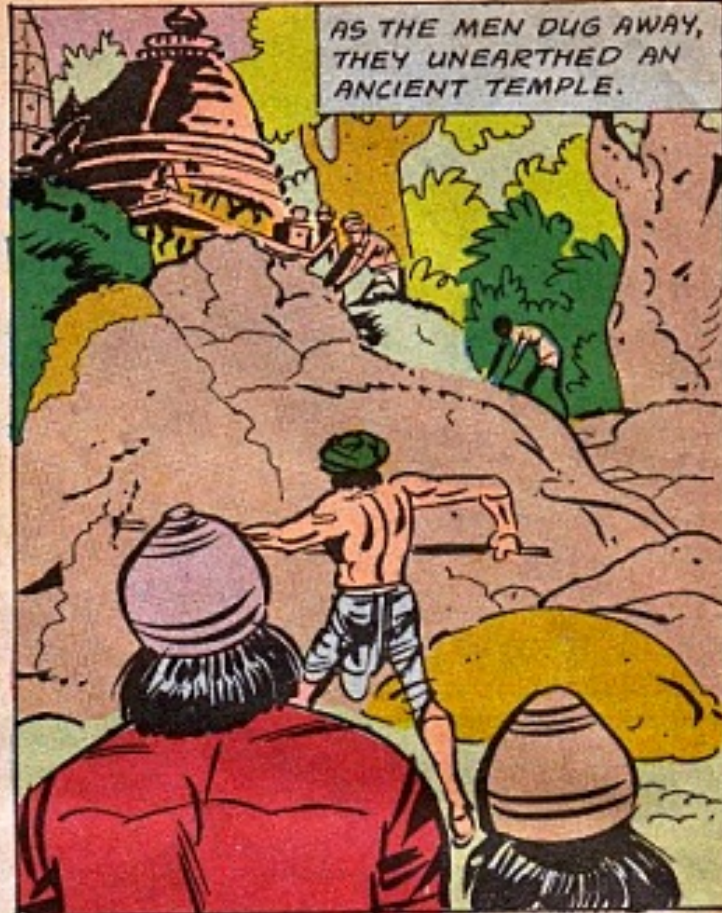
THE ANSWER TO
THIS MYSTERY
PROBABLY LIES
BURIED UNDER
THAT MOUND.



LALITADITYA HAD THE MOUND EXCAVATED.



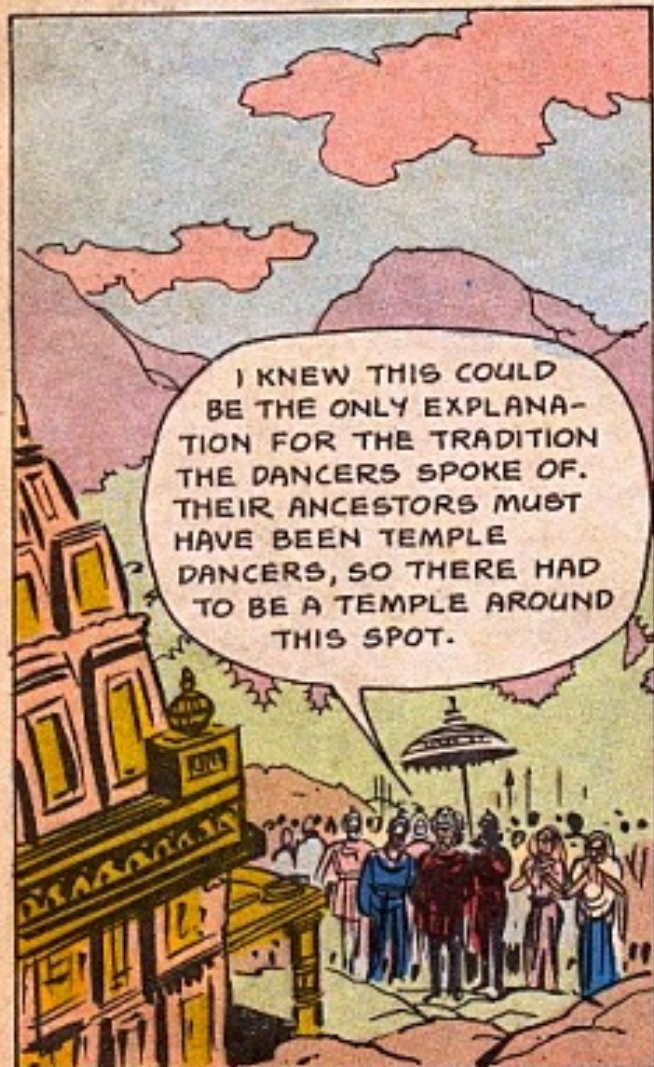
AS THE MEN DUG AWAY, THEY UNEARTHED AN ANCIENT TEMPLE.



LALITADITYA HAD THE TEMPLE RENOVATED AND THE WORSHIP OF THE IDOLS WAS RESUMED IN THE TRADITIONAL FORM.



I KNEW THIS COULD BE THE ONLY EXPLANATION FOR THE TRADITION THE DANCERS SPOKE OF. THEIR ANCESTORS MUST HAVE BEEN TEMPLE DANCERS, SO THERE HAD TO BE A TEMPLE AROUND THIS SPOT.



LATER—

WHAT
IS IT, MY
MAN?

BAD NEWS,
MAHARAJ...

...THE BHAUTTS ARE
PLANNING TO ATTACK
US.

THEN WE SHALL
HAVE TO
FORESTALL
THEM!

SO, LALITADITYA MARCHED TO
THE INHOSPITABLE LAND OF
TIBET...

...AND, IN ONE FIERCE FORAY, WIPED
OUT ANY DREAMS OF CONQUEST THEY
MIGHT HARBOUR.

GLORY TO KING
LALITADITYA!

LALITADITYA SPENT HIS ENTIRE LIFE IN RELENTLESS CRUSADES TO PROTECT HIS LAND, ITS PEOPLE AND ITS CULTURE.

MAHARAJ, WHEN YOU WERE AWAY IN THE LAND OF THE BHATTAS, MUMMUNI, THE ARAB KING ADVANCED TO PARNOTSAT. NOW HE IS PLANNING TO ATTACK US.

WE SHALL FORESTALL HIM TOO.

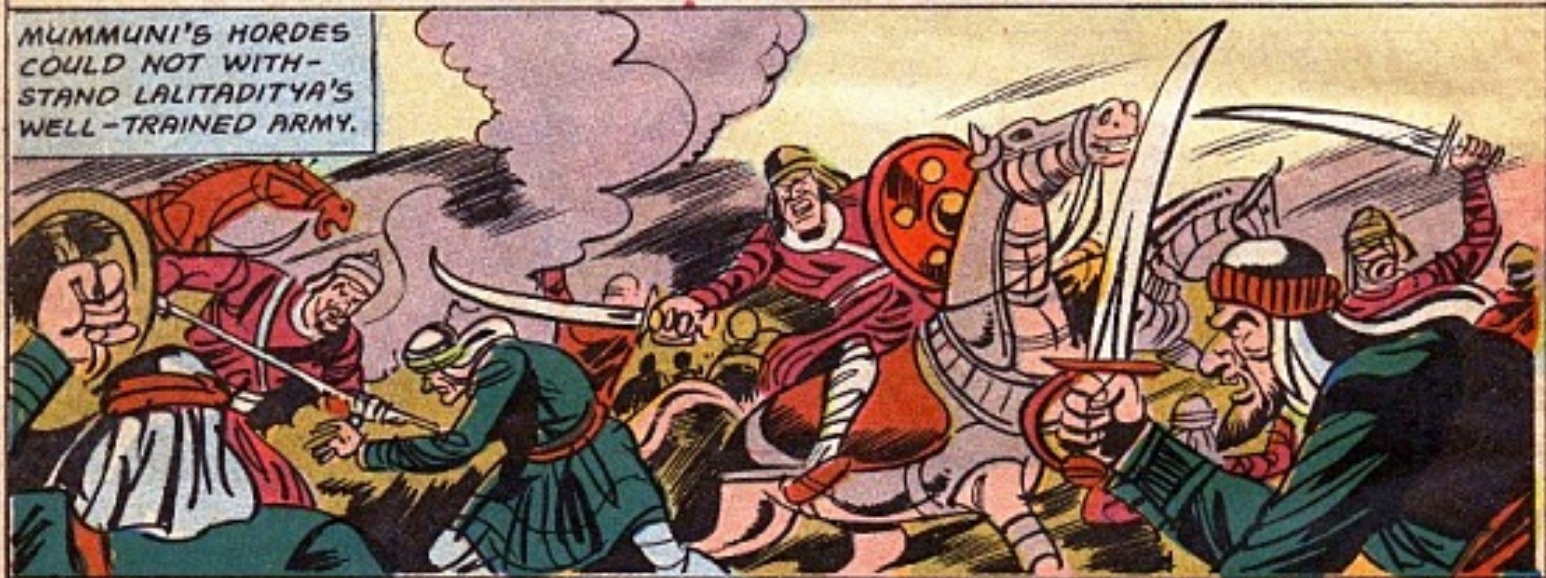


WE SHALL MOUNT AN ATTACK ON HIM, IMMEDIATELY.

YES, MAHARAJ.



MUMMUNI'S HORDES COULD NOT WITHSTAND LALITADITYA'S WELL-TRAINED ARMY.



WE'D BETTER TAKE SHELTER IN THE CITY. THEY WILL NOT ATTACK US THERE. THEY WILL ONLY FIGHT US ON A BATTLE-FIELD.



LET THEM GO.
THEY ARE NOT
WILLING TO
FIGHT.

BESIDES A TRUE
KSHATRIYA DOES NOT
ATTACK THE DWELLINGS
OF PEOPLE. OUR DHARMA
FORBIDS IT.

BUT, IF YOU
LET MUMMUNI
ESCAPE, HE
WILL RETURN.

CHANKUN WAS RIGHT. MUMMUNI
RETURNED AGAIN AND AGAIN.
LALITADITYA HAD TO FIGHT
THREE BATTLES BEFORE HE
COULD FINALLY SUBDUDE HIM.

AT LAST —

MAHARAJ, YOU MAY NOW
REST YOUR SWORD. THERE
ARE NO MORE BATTLES TO
BE FOUGHT. YOU HAVE
BROUGHT ALL THE MINOR
KINGDOMS UNDER YOUR SWAY
AND HAVE ROUTED THE ALIEN
INVADERS AND MARAUDERS
FOR GOOD.

MITRA SHARMA,
I AM HAPPY FOR
THE PEACE IN OUR
LAND. BUT I FEEL
RESTLESS.

A FEW MONTHS LATER —

NO, A LIFE
OF REST IS
NOT FOR ME.

HE SENT FOR HIS MINISTERS.

I HAVE DECIDED TO
LEAVE ON AN EXPEDITION
TO EXPLORE THE UNKNOWN.

BUT, MAHARAJ!



DON'T TRY TO
STOP ME, MITRA
SHARMA. I HAVE
MADE UP MY
MIND.



ENTRUSTING THE
KINGDOM TO THE
CARE OF HIS
MINISTERS,
LALITADITYA
WALKED AWAY,
ALONE.



HIS TASK WAS OVER. HE CAME TO THE FORE
AT A TIME WHEN THE COUNTRY NEEDED
HIM. HE SUCCESSFULLY ROUTED ALIEN
INVADERS AND BY HIS CONQUESTS
BROUGHT MINOR WARRING PRINCIPALITIES,
FOR A BRIEF PERIOD, UNDER THE SWAY OF
ONE AUTHORITY—THE BENEVOLENT
THRONE OF KASHMIR.